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GOOD CITIZENSHIP

BY

GROVER CLEVELAND

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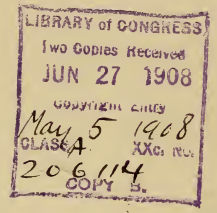

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INTRODUCTION

IT is not of the author's own motion that the following essays are given to the public in this form. With characteristic modesty, Mr. Cleveland was willing that these addresses should lie undiscovered and unread in the limbo of pigeonholes or of yellowing newspaper-file; and yet the thoughtful reader will be the first to proclaim that these utterances are neither insignificant nor ephemeral. Their very themes are age-old. Before Rome was, Patriotism and Good Citizenship were the purest and loftiest ideals of the ancient world; and, through

the ages that have followed, those nations have been noblest, bravest and most enduring in which love of home and love of country have been most deep-seated.

Mr. Cleveland's address on Good Citizenship was delivered before the Commercial Club of Chicago in October, 1903; and that on Patriotism and Holiday Observance before the Union League Club, of the same city, on Washington's Birthday, 1907. Now, with Mr. Cleveland's sanction, they appear for the first time in book form.

No one can scan these pages, however hastily, without saying to himself, "Here is a man who preaches what, for a lifetime, he has been practicing."

Not all patriotism finds ex-

pression in the heat and joy of the battlefield; nor does good citizenship begin and end on election day. Mr. Cleveland has, in himself, proved that an upright and fearless chief magistrate in the White House may be as true a patriot as the leader of a forlorn hope, as lofty a type of citizen as a Garrison or a Phillips. No public man of this generation has been more bitterly assailed than Grover Cleveland; none has met with more unswerving serenity the attacks, fair and foul, of those whose selfish interests have made them his sworn foes.

That famous phrase, uttered years ago, "We love him for the enemies he has made," is a true saying.

THE PUBLISHERS.

GOOD CITIZENSHIP

GOOD CITIZENSHIP

THERE is danger that my subject of American good citizenship is so familiar and so trite as to lack interest. This does not necessarily result from a want of appreciation of the importance of good citizenship, nor from a denial of the duty resting upon every American to be a good citizen. There is, however, abroad in our land a self-satisfied and perfunctory notion that we do all that is required of us in this direction

when we make profession of our faith in the creed of good citizenship and abstain from the commission of palpably unpatriotic sins.

We ought not to be badgered and annoyed by the preaching and exhortation of a restless, troublesome set of men, who continually urge upon us the duty of active and affirmative participation in public affairs. Why should we be charged with neglect of political obligations? We go to the polls on election day, when not too busy with other things, and vote the ticket our party managers have prepared for us. Sometimes, when conditions grow to be so

bad politically that a revival or stirring-up becomes necessary, a goodly number of us actually devote considerable time and effort to better the situation. Of course, we cannot do this always, because we must not neglect money-getting and the promotion of great enterprises, which, as everybody knows, are the evidence of a nation's prosperity and influence.

It seems to me that within our citizenship there are many whose disposition and characteristics very often resemble those found in the membership of our churches. In this membership there is a considerable

proportion composed of those who, having made profession of their faith and joined the church, appear to think their duty done when they live honestly, attend worship regularly, and contribute liberally to church support. In complacent satisfaction, and certain of their respectability, they do not care to hear sermonizing concerning the sinfulness of human nature, or the wrath to come; and if haply they are sometimes roused by the truths of vital Christianity, they soon relapse again to their tranquil and easy condition of listlessness. A description of these, found in the Holy Writ, may

fitly apply to many in the State as well as in the church:

"For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

There is an habitual associate of civic American indifference and listlessness, which reënforces their malign tendencies and adds tremendously to the dangers that threaten our body politic. This associate plays the *rôle* of smooth, insinuating confidence operator and, clothed in the garb of

immutable faith in the invulnerability of our national greatness, it invites our admiring gaze to the flight of the American eagle, and assures us that no tempestuous weather can ever tire his wings. Thus many good and honest men are approached through their patriotic trust in our free institutions and immense national resources, and are insidiously led to a condition of mind which will not permit them to harbor the uncomfortable thought that any omission on their part can check American progress or endanger our country's continued development. Have we not lived as a

nation more than a century; and have we not exhibited growth and achievement in every direction that discredit all parallels in history? After us the deluge. Why then need we bestir ourselves, and why disturb ourselves with public affairs?

Those of our citizens who are deluded by these notions, and who allow themselves to be brought to such a frame of mind, may well be reminded of the good old lady who was wont to impressively declare that she had always noticed if she lived until the first of March she lived all the rest of the year. It is quite likely she

built a theory upon this experience which induced her with the passing of each of these fateful days to defy coughs, colds and consumption and the attacks of germs and microbes in a million forms. However this may be, we know that with no design or intention on her part, there came a first day of March which passed without her earthly notice.

The withdrawal of wholesome sentiment and patriotic activity from political action on the part of those who are indifferent to their duty, or foolhardy in their optimism, opens the way for a ruthless and unrelenting enemy of our free in-

stitutions. The abandonment of our country's watch-towers by those who should be on guard, and the slumber of the sentinels who should never sleep, directly invite the stealthy approach and the pillage and loot of the forces of selfishness and greed. These baleful enemies of patriotic effort will lurk everywhere as long as human nature remains unregenerate; but nowhere in the world can they create such desolations as in free America, and nowhere can they so cruelly destroy man's highest and best aspirations for self-government.

It is useless for us to blink

at the fact that our scheme of government is based upon a close interdependence of interest and purpose among those who make up the body of our people. Let us be honest with ourselves. If our nation was built too much upon sentiment, and if the rules of patriotism and benignity that were followed in the construction have proved too impractical, let us frankly admit it. But if love of country, equal opportunity and genuine brotherhood in citizenship are worth the pains and trials that gave them birth, and if we still believe them to be worth preservation and that they have the inherent vigor

and beneficence to make our republic lasting and our people happy, let us strongly hold them in love and devotion. Then it shall be given us to plainly see that nothing is more unfriendly to the motives that underlie our national edifice than the selfishness and cupidity that look upon freedom and law and order only as so many agencies in aid of their designs.

Our government was made by patriotic, unselfish, sober-minded men for the control or protection of a patriotic, unselfish and sober-minded people. It is suited to such a people; but for those who are selfish, corrupt and unpatriotic

it is the worst government on earth. It is so constructed that it needs for its successful operation the constant care and guiding hand of the people's abiding faith and love, and not only is this unremitting guidance necessary to keep our national mechanism true to its work, but the faith and love which prompt it are the best safeguards against selfish citizenship.

Give to our people something that will concentrate their common affection and solicitous care, and let them be their country's good; give them a purpose that stimulates them to unite in lofty endeavor, and

let that purpose be a demonstration of the sufficiency and beneficence of our popular rule, and we shall find that in their political thought there will be no place for the suggestions of sordidness and pelf.

Who will say that this is now our happy condition? Is not our public life saturated with the indecent demands of selfishness? More than this, can any of us doubt the existence of still more odious and detestable evils which, with steady, cankering growth, are more directly than all others threatening our safety and national life? I speak of the corruption of our suffrage, open

and notorious, of the buying and selling of political places for money, the purchase of political favors and privileges, and the traffic in official duty for personal gain. These things are confessedly common. Every intelligent man knows that they have grown from small beginnings until they have reached frightful proportions of malevolence; and yet respectable citizens by the thousands have looked on with perfect calmness, and with hypocritical cant have declared they are not politicians, or with silly pretensions of faith in our strength and luck have languidly claimed that the country was prosper-

ous, equal to any emergency and proof against all dangers.

Resulting from these conditions in a manner not difficult to trace, wholesome national sentiment is threatened with utter perversion. All sorts of misconceptions pervade the public thought, and jealousies, rapidly taking on the complexion of class hatred, are found in every corner of the land. A new meaning has been given to national prosperity. With a hardihood that savors of insolence, an old pretext, which has preceded the doom of ancient experiments in popular vote, is daily and hourly dinned in our ears. We are told that

the national splendor we have built upon the showy ventures of speculative wealth is a badge of our success. Unsharing contentment is enjoined upon the masses of our people, and they are invited, in the bare subsistence of their scanty homes, to patriotically rejoice in their country's prosperity.

This is too unsubstantial an enjoyment of benefits to satisfy those who have been taught American equality, and thus has arisen, by a perfectly natural process, a dissatisfied insistence upon a better distribution of the results of our vaunted prosperity. We now see its worst manifestation in

the apparently incorrigible dislocation of the proper relations between labor and capital. This of itself is sufficiently distressing; but thoughtful men are not without dread of sadder developments yet to come.

There has also grown up among our people a disregard for the restraints of law and a disposition to evade its limitations, while querulous strictures concerning the actions of our courts tend to undermine popular faith in the course of justice, and, last but by no means least, complaints of imaginary or exaggerated shortcomings in our financial policies furnish an excuse for the flip-

pant exploitation of all sorts of monetary nostrums.

I hasten to give assurance that I have not spoken in a spirit of gloomy pessimism. I have faith that the awakening is forthcoming, and on this faith I build a cheerful hope for the healing of all the wounds inflicted in slumber and neglect.

It is true that there should be an end of self-satisfied gratification, or pretense of virtue, in the phrase, "I am not a politician," and it is time to forbid the prostitution of the word to a sinister use. Every citizen should be politician enough to bring himself within

the true meaning of the term, as one who concerns himself with "the regulation or government of a nation or State for the preservation of its safety, peace and prosperity." This is politics in its best sense, and this is good citizenship.

If good men are to interfere to make political action what it should be, they must not suppose they will come upon an open field unoccupied by an opposing force. On the ground they neglected they will find a host of those who engage in politics for personal ends and selfish purposes, and this ground cannot be taken without a hand-to-hand conflict.

The attack must be made under the banner of disinterested good citizenship, by soldiers drilled in lessons of patriotism. They must be enlisted for life and constantly on duty.

Their creed should bind together in generous coöperation all who are willing to fight to make our government what the fathers intended it to be—a depository of benefits which, in equal current and volume, should flow out to all the people. This creed should teach the wickedness of attempting to make free opportunity the occasion for seizing especial advantages, and should warn against the danger of ruthless

rapacity. It should deprecate ostentation and extravagance in the life of our people, and demand in the management of public affairs simplicity and strict economy. It should teach toleration in all things save dishonesty and infidelity to public trusts.

It should insist that our finance and currency concern not alone the large traders, merchants and bankers of our land, but that they are intimately and every day related to the well-being of our people in all conditions of life, and that, therefore, if any adjustments are necessary they should be made in such manner as shall cer-

tainly maintain the soundness of our people's earnings and the security of their savings. It should enjoin respect for the law as the quality that cements the fabric of organized society and makes possible a government by the people. And in every sentence and every line of this creed of good citizenship the lesson should be taught that our country is a beautiful and productive field to be cultivated by loyal Americans, who, with weapons near at hand, whether they sow and reap or whether they rest, will always be prepared to resist those who attempt to despoil by day and pilfer in the night.

In the day when all shadows shall have passed away and when good citizenship shall have made sure the safety, permanence and happiness of our nation, how small will appear the strifes of selfishness in our civic life, and how petty will seem the machinations of degraded politics.

There shall be set over against them in that time a reverent sense of coöperation in Heaven's plans for our people's greatness, and the joyous pride of standing among those who, in the comradeship of American good citizenship, have so protected and defended our heritage of self-govern-

ment that our treasures are safe in the citadel of patriotism, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

PATRIOTISM AND HOLIDAY OBSERVANCE

PATRIOTISM AND HOLIDAY OBSERVANCE

THE American people are but little given to the observance of public holidays. This statement cannot be disposed of by the allegation that our national history is too brief to allow the accumulation of days deserving civic commemoration. Though it is true that our life as a people, according to the standard measuring the existence of nations, has been a short one, it has been filled with glorious

achievements; and, though it must be conceded that it is not given to us to see in the magnifying mirage of antiquity the exaggerated forms of American heroes, yet in the bright and normal light shed upon our beginning and growth are seen grand and heroic men who have won imperishable honor and deserve our everlasting remembrance. We cannot, therefore, excuse a lack of commemorative inclination and a languid interest in recalling the notable incidents of our country's past under the plea of a lack of commemorative material; nor can we in this way explain our neglect adequately to observe

days which have actually been set apart for the especial manifestation of our loving appreciation of the lives and the deeds of Americans who, in crises of our birth and development, have sublimely wrought and nobly endured.

If we are inclined to look for other excuses, one may occur to us which, though by no means satisfying, may appear to gain a somewhat fanciful plausibility by reason of its reference to the law of heredity. It rests upon the theory that those who secured for American nationality its first foothold, and watched over its weak infancy were so engrossed with

the persistent and unescapable labors that pressed upon them, and that their hopes and aspirations led them so constantly to thoughts of the future, that retrospection nearly became with them an extinct faculty, and that thus it may have happened that exclusive absorption in things pertaining to the present and future became so embedded in their natures as to constitute a trait of character descendible to their posterity, even to the present generation. The toleration of this theory leads to the suggestion that an inheritance of disposition has made it difficult for the generation of today to resist the temptation

inordinately to strive for immediate material advantages, to the exclusion of the wholesome sentiment that recalls the high achievements and noble lives which have illumined our national career. Some support is given to this suggestion by the concession, which we cannot escape, that there is abroad in our land an inclination to use to the point of abuse the opportunities of personal betterment, given under a scheme of rule which permits the greatest individual liberty, and interposes the least hindrance to individual acquisition; and that in the pursuit of this we are apt to carry in our

minds, if not upon our lips, the legend:

"Things done are won; joy's soul lies in the doing."

But the question is whether all this accounts for our indifference to the proper observance of public holidays which deserve observance.

There is another reason which might be advanced in mitigation of our lack of commemorative enthusiasm, which is so related to our pride of Americanism that, if we could be certain of its sufficiency, we would gladly accept it as conclusive. It has to do with the underlying qualities and motives of our free institutions.

Those institutions had their birth and nurture in unselfish patriotism and unreserved consecration; and, by a decree of fate beyond recall or change, their perpetuity and beneficence are conditioned on the constant devotion and single-hearted loyalty of those to whom their blessings are vouchsafed. It would be a joy if we could know that all the bright incidents in our history were so much in the expected order of events, and that patriotism and loving service are so familiar in our present surroundings, and so clear in their manifestation, as to dull the edge of their especial commendation. If the

mind the harmony of American brotherhood and unenvious good-will, the honesty that insures against the betrayal of public trust and hates devious ways and conscienceless practices, the industry that recognizes in faithful work and intelligent endeavor abundant promise of well-earned competence and provident accumulation, and the frugality which outlaws waste and extravagant display as plunderers of thrift and promoters of covetous discontent.

The self-examination invited by this day's commemoration will be incomplete and superficial if we are not thereby

forced to the confession that there are signs of the times which indicate a weakness and relaxation of our hold upon these saving virtues. When thus forewarned, it is the height of recreancy for us obstinately to close our eyes to the needs of the situation, and refuse admission to the thought that evil can overtake us. If we are to deserve security, and make good our claim to sensible, patriotic Americanism, we will carefully and dutifully take our bearings, and discover, if we can, how far wind and tide have carried us away from safe waters.

If we find that the wicked-

ness of destructive agitators and the selfish depravity of demagogues have stirred up discontent and strife where there should be peace and harmony, and have arrayed against each other interests which should dwell together in hearty coöperation; if we find that the old standards of sturdy, uncompromising American honesty have become so corroded and weakened by a sordid atmosphere that our people are hardly startled by crime in high places and shameful betrayals of trust everywhere; if we find a sadly prevalent disposition among us to turn from the highway of honorable industry

into shorter crossroads leading to irresponsible and worthless ease; if we find that widespread wastefulness and extravagance have discredited the wholesome frugality which was once the pride of Americanism we should recall Washington's admonition that harmony, industry and frugality are "essential pillars of public felicity," and forthwith endeavor to change our course.

To neglect this is not only to neglect the admonition of Washington, but to miss or neglect the conditions which our self-examination has made plain to us. These conditions demand something more from

us than warmth and zest in the tribute we pay to Washington, and something more even than acceptance of his teachings, however reverent our acceptance may be.

The sooner we reach a state of mind which keeps constantly before us, as a living, active, impelling force, the truth that our people, good or bad, harmonious or with daggers drawn, honest or unscrupulous, industrious or idle, constitute the source of our nation's temperament and health, and that the traits and faults of our people must necessarily give quality and color to our national behavior, the sooner we shall

appreciate the importance of protecting this source from unwholesome contamination. And the sooner all of us honestly acknowledge this to be an individual duty that cannot be shifted or evaded, and the more thoroughly we purge ourselves from influences that hinder its conscientious performance, the sooner will our country be regenerated and made secure by the saving power of good citizenship.

It is our habit to affiliate with political parties. Happily, the strength and solidity of our institutions can safely withstand the utmost freedom and activity of political discussion

so far as it involves the adoption of governmental policies or the enforcement of good administration. But they cannot withstand the frenzy of hate which seeks, under the guise of political earnestness, to blot out American brotherhood, and cunningly to persuade our people that a crusade of envy and malice is no more than a zealous insistence upon their manhood rights.

Political parties are exceedingly human; and they more easily fall before temptation than individuals, by so much as partisan success is the law of their life, and because their responsibility is impersonal. It

is easily recalled that political organizations have been quite willing to utilize gusts of popular prejudice and resentment; and I believe they have been known, as a matter of shrewd management, to encourage voters to hope for some measure of relief from economic abuses, and yet to "stand pat" on the day appointed for realization.

We have fallen upon a time when it behooves every thoughtful citizen, whose political beliefs are based on reason and who cares enough for his manliness and duty to save them from barter, to realize that the organization of the

party of his choice needs watching, and that at times it is not amiss critically to observe its direction and tendency. This certainly ought to result in our country's gain; and it is only partisan impudence that condemns a member of a political party who, on proper occasion, submits its conduct and the loyalty to principle of its leaders to a Court of Review, over which his conscience, his reason and his political understanding preside.

I protest that I have not spoken in a spirit of pessimism. I have and enjoy my full share of the pride and exultation which our country's material

advancement so fully justifies. Its limitless resources, its astonishing growth, its unapproachable industrial development and its irrepressible inventive genius have made it the wonder of the centuries. Nevertheless, these things do not complete the story of a people truly great. Our country is infinitely more than a domain affording to those who dwell upon it immense material advantages and opportunities. In such a country we live. But I love to think of a glorious nation built upon the will of free men, set apart for the propagation and cultivation of humanity's best ideal of a

free government, and made ready for the growth and fruitage of the highest aspirations of patriotism. This is the country that lives in us. I indulge in no mere figure of speech when I say that our nation, the immortal spirit of our domain, lives in us — in our hearts and minds and consciences. There it must find its nutriment or die. This thought more than any other presents to our minds the impressiveness and responsibility of American citizenship. The land we live in seems to be strong and active. But how fares the land that lives in us? Are we sure that we are doing all we

ought to keep it in vigor and health? Are we keeping its roots well surrounded by the fertile soil of loving allegiance, and are we furnishing them the invigorating moisture of unselfish fidelity? Are we as diligent as we ought to be to protect this precious growth against the poison that must arise from the decay of harmony and honesty and industry and frugality; and are we sufficiently watchful against the deadly, burrowing pests of consuming greed and cankerous cupidity? Our answers to these questions make up the account of our stewardship as keepers of a sacred trust.

The land we live in is safe as long as we are dutifully careful of the land that lives in us. But good intentions and fine sentiments will not meet the emergency. If we would bestow upon the land that lives in us the care it needs, it is indispensable that we should recognize the weakness of our human nature, and our susceptibility to temptations and influences that interfere with a full conception of our obligations; and thereupon we should see to it that cupidity and selfishness do not blind our consciences or dull our efforts.

From different points of view I have invited you to con-

sider with me what obligations and responsibilities rest upon those who in this country of ours are entitled to be called good citizens. The things I pointed out may be trite. I know I have spoken in the way of exhortation rather than with an attempt to say something new and striking. Perhaps you have suspected, what I am quite willing to confess, that, behind all that I have said, there is in my mind a sober conviction that we all can and ought to do more for the country that lives in us than it has been our habit to do; and that no better means to this end are at hand than a revival of pure patriotic affec-

tion for our country for its own sake, and the acceptance, as permanent occupants in our hearts and minds, of the virtues which Washington regarded as all that was necessary to make us a great and happy people, and which he declared to be "the great and essential pillars of public felicity" — harmony, honesty, industry and frugality.

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